

Chapter 1- How, When and Where

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Let's Recall

1. State whether true or false:

a) James Mill divided Indian History into three periods- Hindu, Muslim, and Christian.

▶ False

b) Official documents help us understand what the people of the country think.

▶ False

c) The British thought surveys were important for effective administration.

▶ True

Let's Discuss

2. What is the problem with the periodisation of Indian History that James Mill offers?

Answer

James Mill divided his book into three periods, namely: Hindu, Muslim, and British. According to his prejudiced version of Indian history, the British rule represents all the forces of progress and civilisation, while the period before British rule represents darkness, ignorance, despotism, religious intolerance, caste taboos, superstitious practices, etc.

The view of Mill has several problems which is not acceptable due to reasons:

→ A variety of faiths, apart from Hinduism and Islam, existed in the periods categorised as Hindu and Muslim by Mill.

→ All rulers in ancient India did not share the same faith.

→ It is this country from where two other religions like- Buddhism and Jainism developed and spread to other parts of the world while Hindu religion also existed.

3. Why did the British preserve official documents?

Answer

The British preserved the important official documents because these served as records of what the officials thought, what they were interested in and what they wished for. According to the British, writing was more important than speaking as the documents in archives and museums

can be utilized for reference at a much later period whenever required for studying or debating. These can also serve as an information or proof of any decision or action taken earlier on some matter.

4. How will the information historians get from old newspapers be different from that found in police reports?

Answer

Information is essential for writing history of a time which can be gathered from various sources. Apart from official documents in the archives, historians gather information also from old newspapers, diaries of people, accounts of pilgrims, autobiographies of important personalities and booklets etc. Information found in newspapers is varied, based on incidents that have happened across the country whereas; the police reports are limited and localized. Because of this fact sometimes the information historians get from police reports is not as useful as it is from old newspapers. However for any incidence the newspaper may not quote all the reasons behind this and biased as per the thinking of reporter while in police records we could find some evidences for an incident and unbiased reports.